
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	903 N Street NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	Blagden Alley-Naylor Court Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
		<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Permit Review
Meeting Date:	May 3, 2012	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	#12-306	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Brendan Meyer	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Owner Frederik de Pue seeks permit review for alterations to convert a 2-story brick commercial garage at 903 N Street NW into a restaurant. It is a contributing property in the Blagden Alley-Naylor Court Historic District. Plans were prepared by Michiels Architecture & Partners.

Property Description and Context

The earliest part of the existing front façade was built in 1906 as a one story warehouse. The original carriage door and flanking windows are evidenced by the segmental brick arches that still remain. Two small brick corbels on the flanks show the original building height. A second floor was added about 1950 and is fenestrated by steel casement windows. The lot is landlocked and has no alley access.

The 900 block of N Street shows a variation of building styles, construction dates and building types. No one style, builder, or type dominates. This block features flat-front brick rowhouses from the 1870s, four- and five-story apartment buildings from the early 20th century, and a formstone clad 1870s twin-tower Gothic Revival church. Heights, roof forms, gaps and setbacks are varied. Many residential buildings exhibit storefront alterations c. 1900 at their ground floors.

Proposal

Proposed alterations for the front façade include resizing the pedestrian doors on either side of the garage door and surrounding the west door with a tempered glass and steel entryway. The second floor steel casement windows will be replaced with new steel casements while the mismatched, non-original window is resized to match the others. A low trash enclosure, measuring 5-1/2 x 4-1/2 feet, will be erected against the façade in an area of public space. Although not rendered specifically, the architect has clarified that the segmental brick arches will remain in place and exposed. The concrete paving and curb cut will remain.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The alterations proposed for the façade are consistent with the building's raw utilitarian character. The selected materials of glass and metal are also compatible with this workman-like character.

The location of a permanent trash enclosure in public space is not a treatment that is generally considered compatible with the character of historic districts or consistent with the city's public space regulations.¹ In this particular case, the trash enclosure is not without reason since 903 N Street does not have access to a rear alley. While it is attached in such a way that it is not cutting into the façade, and thus largely reversible, it nevertheless is a visual intrusion not typically encouraged by the Board.

The public space in front of the building is currently entirely paved, which is not inconsistent with the building's warehouse character or for the commercial strips (such as 9th and 11th Streets) in the historic district. However, the building is located just at the point on N Street where the commercial area abuts the residential neighborhood, where the public space "parking" consists of green space that is maintained by the abutting property owners in a *park-like* manner. In the few instances where the Board has approved trash enclosures in public space, it has done so as part of a comprehensive improvement or restoration of the public space (301 Massachusetts Ave NE). It is reasonable to expect that if exterior trash storage is to be approved in this instance, it should be offset with a similarly comprehensive plan to improve the character and quality of the public space in front of this building. Such a plan could include a combination of paving and landscaping that could ease the transition from the commercial to the residential treatment of the public space, while also serving to screen or soften the visual impact of the trash enclosure.

The HPO recommends that the Board find the permit application for front façade alterations to be compatible with the historic district and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act, and that approval for the exterior trash storage container be contingent on the development of a public space landscape plan.

¹ They are also prohibited if the space is proposed for use as a sidewalk café: "Trash cans and other refuse storage containers may not be located near sidewalk cafés" (DCMR 24-314.9 and 24-314.10).